



# IDAHO VOCATION

**WHAT IS A  
VOCATION?**

# Pope John Paul II on Vocation

*This article is a summary of the section of the book *Paths of Love: The Discernment of Vocation According to Aquinas, Ignatius, and Pope John Paul II* that examines the teaching of Pope John Paul II on vocation.*

## Everyone has a personal vocation

For Pope John Paul II, vocation is fundamentally something personal that takes place between a person and God. Yet there is still a certain "objectivity" to vocation; for being a human person means being oriented to the truth, and truth is objective.

In the first place, then, a vocation is that which God uses to direct each and every one of us to his task in life. "Jesus has a specific task in life for each and every one of us. Each one of us is hand-picked, called by name by Jesus! There is no one among us who does not have a divine vocation!"<sup>1</sup> Some are called audibly by God, but the usual kind of call is internal, through the inner working of the Spirit. "What is a vocation? It is an interior call of grace, which falls into the soul like a seed, to mature within it."<sup>2</sup>

We cannot give an everywhere valid account of how a vocation takes place, since "apart from the universal elements that are found in every vocation, each call takes place concretely in ways that are always new and always different—and let us add, always beautiful and wonderful, because God is always wonderful in all that he does."<sup>3</sup> But we can give a general picture, as the Pope does in several places.

Do not be slow to answer the Lord's call! From the passage of the Book of Exodus read to us in this Mass we can learn how the Lord acts in every vocation (cf. Ex 3:1–6, 9–12). First, he provokes a new awareness of his presence—the burning bush. When we begin to show an interest he calls us by name. When our answer becomes more specific and like Moses we say: "Here I am" (cf. v. 4), then he reveals more clearly both himself and his compassionate love for his people in need. Gradually he leads us to discover the practical way in which we should serve him: "I will send you." And usually it is then that fears and doubts come to disturb us and make it more difficult to decide. It is then that we need to hear the Lord's assurance: "I am with you" (Ex 3:12). Every vocation is a deep personal experience of the truth of these words: "I am with you."<sup>4</sup>

# Vocation is a dialogue

The Pope describes the call as a dialogue between us and Christ.

"In the hidden recesses of the human heart the grace of a vocation takes the form of a dialogue. It is a dialogue between Christ and an individual, in which a personal invitation is given. Christ calls the person by name and says: "Come, follow me." This call, this mysterious inner voice of Christ, is heard most clearly in silence and prayer. Its acceptance is an act of faith."<sup>5</sup>

Pope John Paul II frequently explains vocations by comparison with the vocation of the prophet Jeremiah, which the Pope calls a "universal model" for every vocation. God's word comes to Jeremiah and announces to him: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5). Thus begins a dialogue between God and Jeremiah. The Pope uses this description of Jeremiah's calling to illustrate the way God calls each person.

" Lord tells the Prophet Jeremiah that his vocation was part of God's eternal plan even before he was born... These words remind us that each person has a place in God's plan and that each of us should carefully listen to God's voice in prayer in order to discover the special calling we have received in Christ."<sup>6</sup>

## Discerning a vocation

But is a vocation to be decided by prayer alone? Or does "listening to God's voice in prayer" mean an introverted examination of our experiences of prayer? No, for "in many other ways too we learn to know God's will: through important events in our lives, through the example and wisdom of others, and through the prayerful judgment of his Church."<sup>7</sup> All that we learn of ourselves and of the world in which we live can inform this decision. In his letter to youth for the "International Year of Youth," the pope describes the process by which God's call becomes the plan or path for a person's life:

We could speak here of the "life" vocation, which in a way is identical with that plan of life which each of you draws up in the period of your youth... This "plan" is a "vocation" inasmuch as in it there make themselves felt the various factors which call. These factors usually make up a particular order of values (also called a "hierarchy of values"), from which emerges an ideal to be realized, an ideal which is attractive to a young heart. In this process the "vocation" becomes a "plan," and the plan begins to be also a vocation.

...During youth a person puts the question, "What must I do?" not only to himself and to other people from whom he can expect an answer, especially his parents and teachers, but he puts it also to God, as his Creator and Father. He puts it in the context of this particular interior sphere in which he has learned to be in a close relationship with God, above all in prayer. He therefore asks God: "What must I do?", what is your plan for my life? Your creative, fatherly plan? What is your will? I wish to do it.

In this context the "plan" takes on the meaning of a "life vocation," as something which is entrusted by God to an individual as a task. Young people, entering into themselves and at the same time entering into conversation with Christ in prayer, desire as it were to read the eternal thought which God the Creator and Father has in their regard. They then become convinced that the task assigned to them by God is left completely to their own freedom, and at the same time is determined by various circumstances of an interior and exterior nature. Examining these circumstances, the young person, boy or girl, constructs his or her plan of life and at the same time recognizes this plan as the vocation to which God is calling him or her.<sup>8</sup>

The pope thus describes vocation as depending on what we might call "objective" circumstances, both interior and exterior. "[Their task] is determined by various circumstances of an interior and exterior nature." These circumstances vary from individual to individual, and a complete description cannot be given. Yet the primary factor can be summed up with a single word—love. "Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being,"<sup>9</sup> and thus having a vocation means being drawn by love and in love to commit oneself to a way of life.

## Summary

A vocation therefore begins with Christ, who makes an approach in love to an individual person, leading him to search for a path in life by which to respond to Christ's love. In prayerful dialogue with Christ, this person then examines his personal circumstances, in order to find the path of life in which he can make the best gift of himself in love.

## Citation:

- <https://www.pathsoflove.com/johnpaul-vocation.html>
  - 1 Homily, June 1, 1982
  - 2 Angelus message, December 14, 1980
  - 3 Homily, September 7, 1986
  - 4 Homily, January 13, 1995
  - 5 Homily, February 10, 1986
  - 6 Homily, September 2, 1990
  - 7 Ibid.
  - 8 Letter to Youth, *Dilecti Amici*, n. 9
  - 9 *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 11

## Father's Corner

A parishioner asked me recently, “What kind of priests do we need today?” And that question inspired the homily I gave at the Cataldo mission pilgrimage Mass over the summer with many of the faithful and our seminarians. I recalled my own vocation origin story if you will. It was a very simple moment, but clear, when Christ called me to follow Him. I didn’t know much about my faith, and I especially wasn’t up to speed on any Church politics or liturgical drama. All I knew was the Christ that was presented to me in my Catholic upbringing. And it was that Christ who called me in the most simple and direct way, “Follow me.” The same words He spoke to Matthew the tax collector. He didn’t tell me how or why or what it would entail- He just said, “Follow me.” What I found interesting was that during my years of formation and even into priesthood I began to complicate that calling more and more by adding new adjectives to the call. What “kind” of priest would I be? What charism would I embody? What liturgical expression would I express? Would I be liberal and focused on the current Church or conservative and focused on the traditions of the Church? These are broad strokes at best, but I noticed that I began to focus more on the externals of what it means to follow Christ rather than just following Him.

The kind of priests we need today, in my opinion, are priests who are just focused on Jesus Christ.

The unchanging Christ presented to us in Scripture and in the heart of our Catholic traditions, Fathers, and Saints. We need to experience the same Christ speaking to our hearts today, guiding us, filling us, sending us, showing us how to communicate Himself to a new generation with new problems and new challenges in new times, but the same Christ. The more we look at Christ, the more we take His Words into our being, the more we allow Him room to grow in us, by gazing upon Him in prayer and studying His Person- we will begin to embody Him to all those who we meet. In a time when everyone is so desperate for order in the midst of so much moral, theological and political chaos- the priests can have only one rock to stand upon, the rock of Christ Himself, only one boat, the bark of Peter. And when we hear the voice of Christ calling us to “Follow Him” and the voice of the Church affirming that call, we can let go of everything else and heed that voice.



# Testimony of Charles Ineck

The Latin root for the word “vocation” is “voca” which in English translates to “call”. Each of us has a vocation or “calling”, but what does this look like? For me, it was a gentle (and sometimes annoying) tug on my heart towards Christ. This tug pulled me in strange ways, ways that I did not necessarily want to go, ways that even today scare me. I often think of the Gospels and how Christ called Andrew Simon James and John. He called them from their father’s boats, and immediately they left their fathers and their professions to follow this man. I have always strived for this kind of obedience to Christ’s will.

When it was my junior year, I was sitting in adoration when I heard Him ask me “Will you trust me?” I answered yes, and He responded “Go to my seminary.” As awesome as this was, it terrified me. I had always been open to a call to the priesthood, but at the time I was not super open to it. I had a girlfriend, and I had my life planned out pretty well. I was going to go to school for music and become a high school teacher. However, Christ had lassoed my heart. He started to remove things from my life that I did not need. I broke up with my girlfriend and, slowly, began to practice that “trust” that I had promised my Lord.

This was not easy by any means, quite the opposite actually. It seemed the closer I drew to Christ and tried to do his will, the more my life fell apart around me. My dad began to have more health struggles (on top of the already existing ones), family drama was inflamed, and my prayer life became a struggle to uphold.

With the help of many friends and loved ones, both here and above, I made it through the seminary application process. Our Lady has held my hand the entire time, and for this, I am ever grateful.

The call for me was a call to trust. A call to step in faith to the one I love, Jesus Christ. He knows my reservations, and He knows my faults, and He has asked me to follow him and leave those behind. This is the call that I am actively seeking to answer.

O God, you know the hearts of those whom you have created. Open the ears of Your people, that they may hear Your call to them, as You opened the ears of Your servant Samuel. Let them be attentive to the good desires that You have planted in their hearts, that they may grow to become realities for the service of Your Kingdom.

# St. Paul's Staff Highlight

Hello!

My name is Trinity Baines and I am the new Coordinator of Media Operations for St. Paul's Student Center. Below is a little bit about me and how I became involved with Bronco Catholic.

I was born into a very Catholic home, having the faith be a part of almost every aspect of my life. I was involved in my parish, youth group, and when it came to my education, religious studies were a part of my everyday curriculum.

When it was time to go to college, I felt called to do some sort of ministry work, so I chose John Paul the Great Catholic University in San Diego. After three years, I received my Bachelor's Degree in Communications Media, emphasizing New Evangelization. I moved back to Idaho and quickly got to work.

I have worked in various areas, from food service to podcasting, and even education! I got connected with St. Paul's Student Center in the Fall of 2022 through my work with Salt & Light Catholic Radio in Boise.



After coming to the Thursday Night Newman Nights and recording the talks, I slowly started to feel connected to the center, and I fell in love with the community. I started going to Mass every Sunday at the center, and I knew that I wanted to be more and more involved in its mission.

That opportunity quickly arose when in June, Father Nathan reached out and offered me the position of running the media for the center. Of course, I jumped at the opportunity. I have loved getting to know my co-workers and some of the students. I am excited to see what my time at the center brings, and I know it will be nothing but a blessing towards my growth in every single way.

# UPCOMING EVENTS



- September 1st-3rd - Labor Day camping trip
- September 9th (Sat.) - Football vs. UCF
- September 16th (Sat.) - Football vs. North Dakota
- October 6th (Fri.) - Oktoberfest
- October 7th (Sat.) - Alumni tailgate: Football vs. San Jose
- October 20th-22nd (Fri-Sun.) - Holy Spirit FOCUS retreat
- October 28th (Sat.) - Football vs. Wyoming